

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 3085

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Children & Family Services & Corrections, February 26, 2004

Title: An act relating to family decision meetings.

Brief Description: Encouraging the use of family decision meetings regarding children in the child welfare system.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, Dickerson, Orcutt, Shabro, Pettigrew, Darneille and Morrell).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/25/04, 2/26/04 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to provide child welfare services throughout the state. Child welfare services are defined by state law as public social services, which strengthen, supplement, or substitute for parental care and supervision for the purpose of:

- preventing or remedying the neglect, abuse, exploitation, or criminal behavior of children;
- protecting and caring for dependent or neglected children;
- assisting children who are in conflict with their parents, and assisting parents who are in conflict with their children;
- protecting and promoting the welfare of children; and
- providing adequate care of children away from their homes.

Summary of Bill: By January 1, 2005, DSHS must consider options for the use of family decision meetings, develop strategies for implementing a policy of meaningful family involvement throughout the state within existing resources, and present implementation recommendations to the Legislature regarding the use of family decision meetings.

"Family decision meeting" is defined to mean a family-focused intervention facilitated by dedicated professional staff that is designed to build and strengthen the natural care-giving

system for the child. The purpose of the family decision meeting is to establish a plan that provides for the safety and permanency needs of the child.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Families which can be engaged and involved in the welfare of their children are more likely to make positive decisions, especially if they are involved in critical decision making. The theme of involving families is positive.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Art Cantrall, Department of Social and Health Services; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.